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Director of
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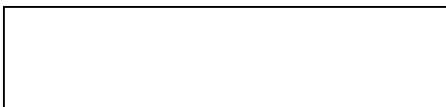
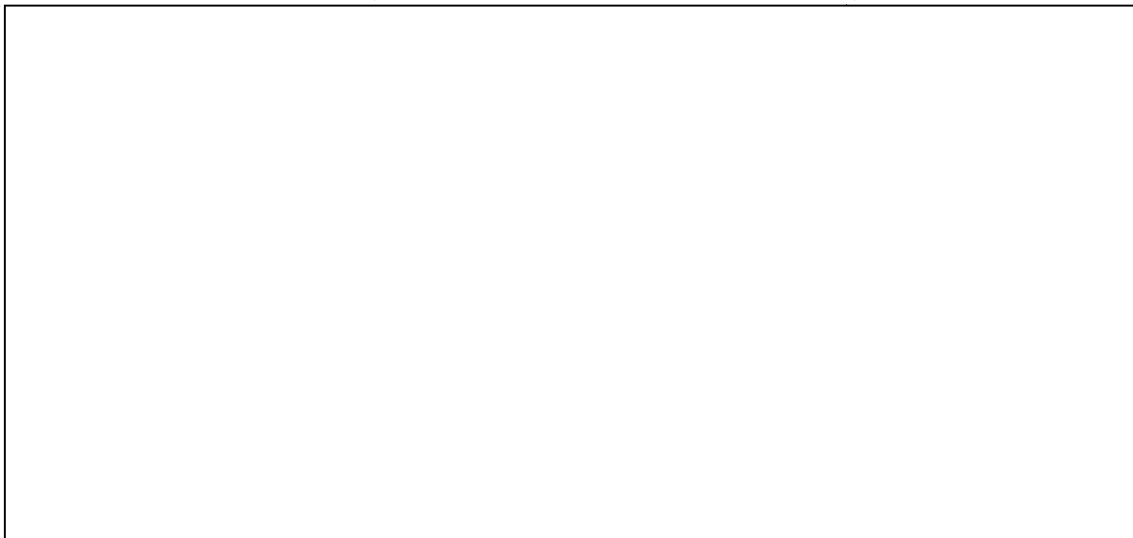
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SITUATION REPORT

IRAN

Ayatollah Beheshti's remarks on the hostage issue yesterday reflect an apparent desire to keep his political options open.

The Islamic Republic Party chief commented that it might be possible to pardon the hostages without a trial, if a political resolution of the crisis could be reached. He added, however, that the National Assembly might not consider the issue until June or July. (U)

An astute politician, Beheshti is likely to follow shifts in the public mood closely. He is careful to avoid taking an unambiguous position on the hostages that could leave him open to criticism. His maneuvering reflects his judgment that his party's political survival depends upon continued support from the Iranian masses.

Relations With Iraq

Both countries, however, continue to exchange propaganda attacks. Tehran Radio yesterday evidently called for a "holy war" to overthrow the regime in Baghdad. (U)

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Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in turn is calling for Iranians to overthrow Khomeini and is demanding that Iran agree to restore Iraq's full sovereignty over the waterway between the two countries. The Iraqi leader also is saying that Iran must withdraw from the three disputed islands in the Persian Gulf and acknowledge the rights of Iran's Arab minority in Khuzestan Province. (U)

Ghotbzadeh's moderate comments may have been in preparation for a trip to various Arab countries now apparently scheduled to begin Saturday. He had postponed a trip to Syria and Algeria, and press reports indicate he now may also visit Lebanon, Bahrain, and Kuwait. (U)

EC Meetings on Iran

The EC political directors--at the request of Italy and France--are meeting in Rome this afternoon to lay the groundwork for the EC foreign ministers' session next Tuesday on Iran.

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CHINA-US: Comments on Iran

Beijing has again urged the US to exercise restraint toward Iran. (U)

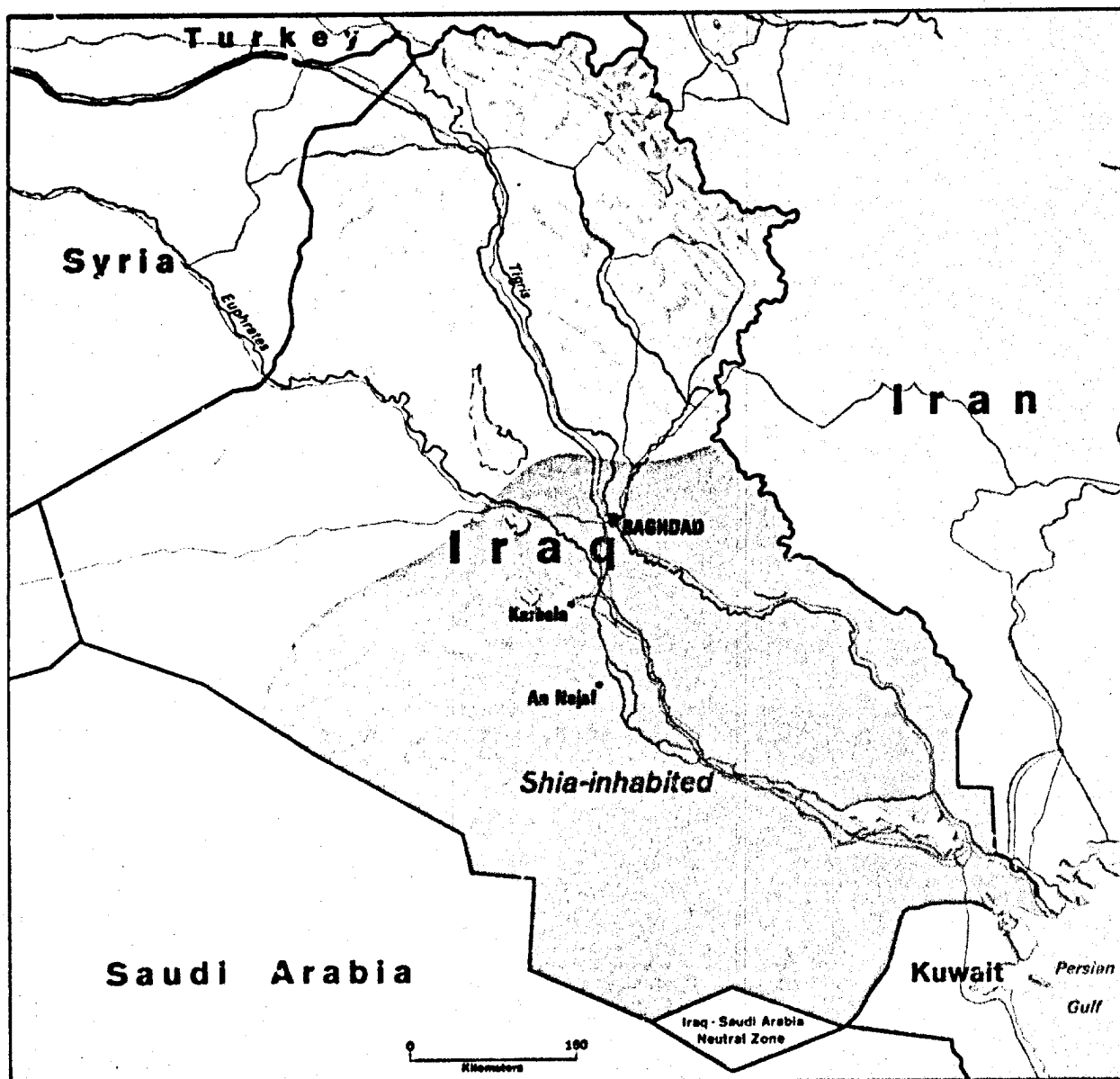
A commentary published in *People's Daily* on Sunday stated that the US decision to break diplomatic ties and the "strong reaction" in Iran "will bring further deterioration in US-Iranian relations which is obviously not in the interests of both countries." The commentary reiterated Beijing's principal concern that the US and Iran avoid giving the Soviets any opportunity that they can exploit. (U)

On the same day the *Xinhua* news agency described Soviet tactics designed ultimately to gain control over Persian Gulf oil sources. The report cited Western media claims that Soviet forces could seize Iranian oil-fields and Tehran before the US could take effective counteraction. (U)

The Chinese have sent a new ambassador to Tehran and are likely to continue efforts to cultivate Iran while distancing themselves from US sanctions. Beijing has avoided a hectoring tone in counseling US restraint, while appealing to the US and Iran to pursue a peaceful settlement. (U)

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IRAQ: Crackdown on Shia Opposition

The government is mounting a campaign to suppress Shia Muslim dissidents, who are being encouraged by Iranian civilian and religious leaders. []

Both antiregime violence and Baathist efforts to repress it have increased since the assassination attempt on a senior Iraqi official on 1 April. Antigovernment incidents have occurred in Baghdad and in the predominantly Shia southern part of the country, including the religious centers at Karbala and An Najaf. []

[]

The government announced last week that any Iraqi associated with the Da'wa Party, an extremist Shia organization, will be executed. Baghdad claims the group has ties with Iran, Iraqi Kurdish rebels, and Communists and says that it has seized arms and explosives belonging to the organization. []

The reputed head of the party, Ayatollah Baqr Sadr, has been under house arrest since last June but may recently have been moved to a prison in Baghdad. Rumors circulated this week that he had been executed. Sadr's death at the hands of the Iraqi regime would hand Shia activists and their Iranian backers an emotional issue around which they could rally support and could set off the antiregime outburst in Iraq that Iranian leaders have been calling for. []

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